

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Farm Service Agency  
Washington, DC 20250

**Notice PM-2357**

**For:** FAS, FSA, and RMA Employees

**Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Open Season**

**Approved by:** Deputy Administrator, Management



**1 Overview**

**A Background**

During the TSP open season, employees may start, change, or stop contributions to their TSP account.

**B Purpose**

This notice announces the TSP Open Season, being held from April 15, 2003, through June 30, 2003.

**2 Eligibility**

**A Employees Eligible to Participate**

The following employees are eligible to participate in TSP:

- employees in a retirement coverage position
- employees who stopped their TSP contributions during the previous open season, and want to restart contributions this open season
- employees who stopped their TSP contributions outside of an open season before October 15, 2002, and want to restart contributions this open season.

| <b>Disposal Date</b> | <b>Distribution</b>  |
|----------------------|--|
| July 1, 2003         | FAS, FSA, and RMA Employees; State Offices relay to County Offices |

## 2 Eligibility (Continued)

### B Agency Contributions and Matching Funds

Employees covered by the Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS), and the Foreign Service Pension System (FSPS) are eligible to receive an automatic agency 1 percent and agency matching contributions effective June 1, 2003, if first hired before December 1, 2002, and **not** previously eligible to receive agency contributions.

The automatic agency 1 percent will be contributed to employees' TSP account whether or not the employee contributes.

**Note:** Employees who were previously eligible to receive agency contributions, are **not** required to serve another waiting period to receive agency contributions.

If the FERS/FSPS employee elects to contribute, they will receive agency matching contributions to their TSP account at the rate of a dollar for a dollar for the first 3 percent and 50 cents on the dollar for the next 2 percent. Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and Federal Service Retirement and Disability System (FSRDS) employees are **not** eligible for agency contributions.

### C Contribution Limits

The amount of TSP contributions that may be contributed each pay period must be specified as a whole percentage of basic pay or a whole dollar amount. If a dollar amount is specified, this amount **cannot** exceed the maximum percentage amount allowed as follows.

| FERS/FSPS Limit | CSRS Limit |
|-----------------|------------|
| 13 percent      | 08 percent |

**Note:** The maximum contribution amount will increase by 1 percent each year through the year 2005 at which time it is scheduled to be lifted entirely.

### D Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Elective Deferral Limit

The total amount that an employee may contribute to TSP each year will continue to be capped by IRS elective deferral limit. The elective deferral limit for 2003 is \$12,000.00. The TSP system will **not** process a contribution that will cause the total amount of an employee's contribution for the year to exceed the elective deferral limit.

## 2 Eligibility (Continued)

### E Investment Funds

Eligible employees may invest all or any portion of their future TSP contributions in any of the following 5 investments funds :

- C Fund, Common Stock Index Investment Fund
- G Fund, Government Securities Investment Fund
- F Fund, Fixed Income Index Investment Fund
- S Fund, Small Capitalization Stock Index Investment Fund
- I Fund, International Stock Index Investment Fund

Allocation of contributions among the 5 investment funds may be made in 1 percent increments. See TSP Summary Booklet for more information on the investment funds.

To allocate contributions among the 5 investments funds, employees should:

- access TSP Thriftline at 504-255-8777, using their TSP personal identification number (PIN)
- use the TSP website, **www.tsp.gov**, using their TSP PIN
- complete and mail TSP-50 to TSP.

A change in the allocation of future contributions may be done at anytime using 1 of the above methods. **Use of the TSP website is highly encouraged.**

### F Employees Not Contributing to TSP

FERS/FSPS employees who are **not** contributing to TSP, but are receiving the agency automatic 1 percent contribution, may invest all or any portion of the agency automatic 1 percent contribution in any of the 5 investment funds.

### 3 Materials

#### A Open Season Materials

Employees interested in TSP may request the following materials below from their servicing personnel office:

- TSP-1, "TSP Election Form"
- TSP "Open Season Update" Booklet
- TSP-3, "TSP Designation of Beneficiary Form"
- TSP-50, "Investment Allocation".

**Note:** NFC provides all eligible employees with the Update Booklet in their earnings and leave statement.

Current participants seeking additional information about TSP may obtain TSPBK-08, "Summary of the TSP", from their servicing personnel office or visit the TSP website at: **www.tsp.gov**.

### 4 Making an Election

#### A Making an Open Season Election or Change

To make a TSP election or change contribution amounts, employees are encouraged to process TSP-1 through the Employee Express system using their Employee Express PIN by either method:

- if using either Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer, access through the internet at **www.employeeexpress.gov**.
- by touch-tone phone at 912-757-3086 or 1-800-827-6291
- Complete and submit TSP-1 to your servicing personnel office for processing.

**Note:** If processing change using Employee Express, TSP-1 should **not** be sent to servicing personnel office and a confirmation of change will be given via e-mail.

## 5 Effective Dates and Monthly Rates

### A Effective Dates of Election

Following are the effective dates of open season elections.

| IF TSP-1 is entered into Employee Express...     | THEN the effective date is... |
|--|-------------------------------|
| after April 15, 2003, but before<br>May 31, 2003 | June 1, 2003, Pay Period 11   |
| after June 1, 2003, but before<br>June 14, 2003  | June 15, 2003, Pay Period 12  |
| after June 15, 2003, but before<br>June 28, 2003 | June 29, 2003, Pay Period 13  |
| after June 29, 2003, but before<br>July 1, 2003  | July 13, 2003, Pay Period 14  |

**Note:** TSP-1's entered to cancel contributions will become effective the last day of the pay period in which the employee enters it in Employee Express.

### B Monthly Rates of Return

For the latest monthly rates of return on the 5 investment funds, employees should visit the TSP website at [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov) and click on the "Rates of Return".

## 6 Contacts

### A National Office Contacts

National Office employees shall contact the appropriate office according to the following table for additional information.

| IF employee needs to...               | THEN...  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| obtain TSP forms or publications      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• download form from the internet, at <b>www.tsp.gov</b></li> <li>• go to Room 0086-South</li> <li>• go to Room 5700, L Street</li> <li>• contact the Services Unit at 202-418-9135 or 202-418-9136.</li> </ul> |
| verify TSP election                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review leave and earning statement for effective pay period</li> <li>• contact the Services Unit after June 1 at 202-418-9135 or 202-418-9136.</li> </ul>   |
| obtain policy information or guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• L Street, Room 5700</li> <li>• contact the Performance Management, Benefits, and Awards Branch at 202-418-9021.</li> </ul>  |

**6      Contacts (Continued)**

**B   Field Office Contacts**

State and County Office employees shall contact the appropriate office, according to the following table for additional information.

| <b>Location</b>  | <b>Contact</b>   |
|--|--|
| Kansas City FSA Complex<br>RMA Kansas City Offices<br>St. Louis Office | servicing personnel clerk, Processing Section,<br>Personnel Division at 816-926-6225 |
| RMA Regional Service and<br>Compliance Offices<br>FAS Overseas         | Darla Hensley, HRD/PMBAB at 202-418-9021<br>Susan Brown, HRD/PMBAB at 202-418-9039   |
| State Office   | State Office, Administrative Office  |
| County Office  | State Office   |